

Partisanship is flaring again on Capitol Hill, casting doubt on President Barack Obama's effort to bring a spirit of compromise to Washington. But Obama and his key advisers say they remain optimistic about changing the harsh tone even as Republican leaders in the House sharpen their rhetoric and warn that they cannot support Obama's economic plan, the centerpiece of his agenda.

Obama traveled to Capitol Hill yesterday and listened to ideas offered by Republicans in both the House and Senate. In some cases the exchanges were sharp in the closed-door meetings, but neither the president nor the GOP legislators gave much ground, according to some who attended. Overall, Obama defended the Democrats' \$825 billion economic recovery package now being considered in Congress while the Republicans said it contained too much spending and not enough tax cuts.

Afterward, Obama expressed hope that "we can all put politics aside and do the American people's business right now."

White House officials expect that the legislation will pass the House late today, if only because the Democrats hold an overwhelming majority in that chamber. GOP support appears to be very thin. If Republican backing is minimal, it will be a bad sign for future bipartisan compromises. GOP leaders say they have been largely shut out of decision-making on the bill by their Democratic counterparts.

Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.) praised Obama for reaching out to the GOP and told CNN's Situation Room: "I think he is trying to deliver on his promise to change the way Washington works." But Cantor said his message "has not seeped through to congressional Democrats" who he blamed for loading the Obama legislation with pork and other special projects that won't stimulate the economy. **Rep. John Campbell (R-Calif.) who also attended the House meeting, told MSNBC that the atmosphere was respectful and Obama was engaging, but "No minds were changed."**

White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs was upbeat about the tone of the meetings during his press conference yesterday, "It was cordial," he said. "Maybe it's rare, but I think it's helpful in the process" of coming up with the best legislation possible.

